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BY
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EXISTENCE, MEANING, AND REALITY IN LOCKE'S ESSAY
AND IN PRESENT EPISTEMOLOGY

BY ✓

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EXISTENCE, MEANING, AND REALITY IN LOCKE'S ESSAY AND IN PRESENT EPISTEMOLOGY¹

A. W. MOORE

To MANY, anything more than a passing reference to Locke, these days, will appear to be an anachronism. What profit can there be in threshing over straw as old and thoroughly flailed as Locke's theory of knowledge? Why return from the outposts of the epistemological battle to an ancient, deserted, and almost forgotten camp? Those who feel perfectly secure in the present position, who feel that all points in the rear and on the flanks of the advance thus far have been left well fortified, will answer: "Why?" But there are some, and their number is increasing, who do not share this sense of security and who feel that the difficulty is not one of momentary detail merely, but one involving the entire plan and method of the movement beginning in Locke. To these a review of the problem in the elementary and primitive form in which Locke presents it, and a reconsideration of the "common-sense" solution he offers, may not seem to be a case of misdirected effort.

Moreover, it may appear to some that the indulgent attitude, which it is the fashion to take toward Locke's epistemology, often has less warrant than is assumed. Locke's pioneer services are of course duly recognized, but his methods and results have long been regarded as having only an historical interest. It has long since been agreed that, instead of finding a path through the epistemological "forest primeval," he completely lost his way. The first "blaze" believed to have been made through that wilderness has, for over a century, borne the name of Kant. That "blaze" has become a great highway, splendidly equipped, and traveled by an innumerable company seeking the realm of truth and reality believed to lie at the terminus. But after more than a century's journeyings, with the promised land still beyond the horizon, some are beginning to wonder whether Kant, after all, really did get through. The highway, broad, magnificent, and thronged as it is, still runs through the wilderness of "appearance." And this doubt is not abated when it is seen that the highway is

¹ The standpoint from which this paper is written is the outgrowth of work done a few years ago in Professor Dewey's seminar in logic—a seminar remarkable for its development of critical and reconstructive principles. Since this paper was written the collection of Oxford essays edited by Mr. Sturt under the title *Personal Idealism* has come to hand. So marked is the accord of the general principles of this paper with much of the doctrine of this volume—especially with Mr. SCHILLER'S essay on "Axioms as Postulates" and with some parts of Mr. Stout's essay on "Error"—that one might easily infer that they were written within the same "sphere of influence."

That two movements so similar in spirit should have been developing, independently of each other, in centers four thousand miles apart, is interesting and significant. The extent of the agreement of this paper with Mr. SCHILLER'S essay on "Axioms, etc.," and his paper on "Useless Knowledge" in *Mind*, N. S., Vol. XI, No. 42, offers suggestions for footnote references on almost every page. But there being, for the most part, no particular reason for making these references at one place rather than another I have decided to combine most of these possible citations in this one general statement.

often crossed and sometimes paralleled no little distance by Locke's old trail. To point out some of these crossings and parallels, and to suggest a few characteristics of what appears to some as a possible way—not *to* reality, but a way *of* reality—is the aim of this paper.

Dropping the venerable and overburdened figure, and passing at once to the technical discussion of the theme, we find that, in terms of present-day logic and epistemology, the problem which Locke faces in Book IV of the *Essay* is that of the relation of existence, meaning, and reality to each other. Locke begins by attempting to identify reality with meaning. Failing in this, he tries to equate it with existence, and in the end attempts to divide the realm of reality between meaning and existence, leaving each, however, disputing the claims of the other.

Locke's first definition of knowledge is as follows: "Since the mind in all its thoughts and reasonings hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, . . . knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connection and agreement or disagreement of any of our ideas."² It may be said, and truly, that Locke's ideas here are not meanings as modern logic understands meaning, but that they are existences—psychical things. But it is precisely in the attempt to cut off these meanings from existence that they become psychical existences. To be sure, present logic tells us that knowledge involves "the loosing of meaning from existence," the severance of the "what" from the "that." But it tells us also that, at the same time, it involves "the reference of meaning to existence." But if the meanings—the "whats"—are taken as entirely loosed, so loosed that they become lost, from their existences, then they become, what they are here for Locke, a collection of psychical things. Thus does abstract idealism become a sort of psychical materialism.

The difficulty inherent in the attempt to thus state knowledge in terms of these psychical existences comes out at once in Locke's further account of "agreement and disagreement." This is contained in his statement of the four "kinds" of agreement and disagreement, to-wit: (1) identity or diversity; (2) relation; (3) coexistence or non-coexistence of ideas in the same subject; (4) agreement or disagreement of ideas with real existence.³ The second "kind," Locke says, is really a general form of all the others, and is therefore not co-ordinate with them. In the fourth kind we recognize Locke's second conception of knowledge as the reference of ideas to reality as existence, and it is not to be considered, therefore, in the discussion of this first statement of knowledge as consisting in the reference of ideas to each other. The third kind of agreement and disagreement, as will be seen, is a transition statement which includes within it both the first and second definitions of knowledge and serves to break the abruptness of the transition. We have left, then, identity and diversity as the criterion of agreement and disagreement, in this first definition of knowledge.

² *Essay*, Book IV, chap. 1, sec. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, sec. 3.

Locke's illustration is as follows:

When we know that white is not black, what do we else but perceive that these two ideas do not agree? When we possess ourselves with the utmost security of the demonstration, that three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, what do we more but perceive that equality to two right ones, does necessarily agree to, and is inseparable from the three angles of a triangle?⁴

Here Locke apparently makes agreement and disagreement mean mere identity and difference. Black and white disagree because one *is* not the other. But the triangle proposition, given as an illustration of *agreement*, must possess this kind of *disagreement*. The ideas in "agreement" must yet be different ideas. On the other hand, in disagreement there must be a common basis; there must be a disagreement about something—color, size, etc. Thus agreement and disagreement each involves both identity and diversity, and the latter cannot, therefore, serve to differentiate them. Here Locke has come upon the old problem of unity in difference, of the one and the many, which so puzzled the Greeks and which was the crucial question for his contemporary, Spinoza. In a world of givens, whether psychical or physical, meanings or existences, there appears no way of reconciling the demands of unity and difference, nor of finding a basis for agreement and disagreement. Each given is simply there. White is white, black is black; there is an end of it. There is no basis or meaning for either harmony or opposition. As content, a unity of givens appears impossible. As factors, in a *process*, working to some *end*, there could be a unity of *function*. In a world of givens the problem of unity is insoluble.⁵

Locke's tacit recognition of these difficulties is found in his confession, farther on, that agreement and disagreement of this sort, except in the case of certain general mathematical and moral propositions, yields only "trifling" knowledge. In knowledge "which has most to do with the affairs of life," knowledge of substances, this definition of agreement and disagreement will not apply.

Gold is malleable, is true and certain; but there is here nothing affirmed of gold but that that sound stands for an idea in which malleability is contained and such a sort of truth and certainty as this it is to say a centaur is fourfooted.⁶

And again:

It will be altogether as true a proposition to say all centaurs are animals, as that all men are animals; and the certainty of one as great as the other. For in both propositions the words are put together according to the agreement of the ideas in our minds; and the agreement of the idea of animal with that of centaur is as clear and visible to the mind, as the agreement of the idea of animal with that of man; and so these two propositions are equally true, equally certain. But of what use is all such truth to us?⁷

The attempt to state knowledge in terms of a lot of given meanings has, then, yielded little worthy the name of knowledge. It is Kant's system of concepts, empty without percepts, out of which can come only "analytic," "trifling" propositions.

⁴*Ibid.*, sec. 2.

⁵The difficulty is, of course, just as acute on the side of the differences.

⁶*Essay*, Book IV, chap. 6, sec. 9.

⁷*Ibid.*, chap. 5, sec. 7.

And Locke's problem, too, at this point, is "the possibility of synthetic propositions;" that is, the possibility of finding "real" existences for these divorced meanings. In other words, it is the problem of converting his world of psychical existences into true meanings, by finding something for them to mean.

This is the point at which Locke, like Spinoza,⁸ simply shakes the hat, and *presto!* — there is the "real world." Locke tries to lessen the abruptness of this transition to reality by two or three devices. First, as we have seen, this second definition of knowledge is given as the fourth "sort of agreement and disagreement." "The fourth and last sort of agreement and disagreement is that of *actual* and *real* existence, agreeing to any idea."⁹ Then he has stated at the outset of the *Essay* that he will use *idea* as meaning "either image in the mind or quality in the object." Finally he introduces a statement of agreement and disagreement, which he gives as the third "kind" of agreement and disagreement, and which forms a transition from the first to the second general conception of knowledge. This transition statement, indeed, contains one of the best examples of Locke's confessed equivocation in the use of *idea* and *thing*.

The third sort of agreement and disagreement to be found in our ideas, which the perception of the mind is employed about, is coexistence or non-coexistence in the same subject, and this belongs particularly to *substances*. Thus, when we pronounce concerning gold that it is fixed, our knowledge of this truth amounts to no more but this, that fixedness or a power to remain in the fire unconsumed, is *an idea* that always accompanies and is joined with that particular sort of yellowness, weight, fusibility, malleableness, and solubility in *agua regia*, which make our *complex idea* signified by the word gold.¹⁰

In the first part of this statement the coexistence is "in the same subject" or "substance." In the last part of it, it is in the "complex idea."

In this transition statement Locke has thus combined his first and second general definitions of knowledge. Taking the "subject" or "substance" as a complex idea, this transition statement can be brought under the first general definition of knowledge as consisting in the agreement or disagreement of ideas. But, then, it shares too its "useless" and "trifling" character. It is precisely of the same kind as the proposition, "gold is malleable," cited above as an illustration of "trifling knowledge." On the other hand, if the subject or substance here means a "reality beyond," which is represented or described by the ideas, then it is essentially the same as the fourth kind of agreement and falls under Locke's second general definition of knowledge.

Passing now to the second statement of knowledge, as consisting in the agreement or disagreement of ideas with "real existence," let us note that it agrees with the statement of modern logic which defines knowledge as "the act which refers an ideal content (recognized as such) to a reality beyond the act."¹¹ "Gold is soluble," as an expression of knowledge, does not now mean the mere reference of the idea, soluble, to the idea, gold. That would be "trifling knowledge." Here it means the reference

⁸ Cf. SPINOZA, *Ethics*, Part I, Prop. XXVIII.

⁹ *Essay*, Book IV, chap. 1, sec. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, sec. 6. The italics are mine.

¹¹ BRADLEY, *Principles of Logic*, p. 10.

of the entire content, "gold soluble," etc., to "real existence," to "a reality beyond." "Our knowledge, therefore, is real only so far as there is conformity between our ideas and the reality of things."¹² It is true, Locke's ideal content does not have the unity and solidarity which it has in Mr. Bradley's conception. Locke's ideal content is an aggregation, but, in so far as it is taken altogether as the *meaning* and referred away to a reality beyond itself for its *subject*, it appears to be in essential agreement with Mr. Bradley's statement.

A few points should be noted at the outset of a consideration of this second definition of knowledge. First, whereas, in the first definition, the materials of knowledge were the given ideas, here they are a system of given ideas, on the one hand, and of given existences on the other. They are given in separation; the problem is to effect a unity. Second, reality is identified wholly with the side of existence. That is, the real is entirely and unqualifiedly opposed to the ideal—to meaning. Third, reality as existence is taken as a completed and fixed whole. Movement, development, is all on the side of the ideas—of meaning. Finally, meaning means merely representation, either as a copy or as an algebraic symbol. These are the assumptions which underlie Locke's second definition of knowledge and which are responsible for his subsequent difficulties. It is needless to follow all the tacks of the course which Locke steers through these difficulties. It will be sufficient for our purpose to restate what seem to be the fundamental dilemmas and their significance from the standpoint of this discussion.

The first difficulty, or rather the first form of *the* difficulty, which Locke continually encounters, is the very ancient and obvious, but very persistent and still very pertinent, one, of how, if meaning and existence are given apart, the former gets its reference to the latter. Locke's first attempt to deal with this difficulty, as most attempts before and since, virtually amounts in the end to saying that, while they are given apart, they are also given in reference. Waiving for the present the paradox in this state of affairs, with the reference as well as the separation given, the problem of "trifling propositions," on the one hand, and error, on the other, must forthwith be faced. And here it usually happens that in making room for doubt and error the separation is emphasized so much that the problem of reference and connection again becomes acute. The dilemma is a reference given, hence trifling, or a reference which can never be verified, hence uncertain. In the language of modern logic, "thought appears either tautologous or false."

Locke's only solution of the case is an appeal to the Deity or to "nature."

Herein therefore is founded the reality of our knowledge concerning substances; that all our complex ideas of them must be such and such only as are made up of such simple ones as *have been discovered to coexist in nature*. . . . Whatever simple ideas have been found to coexist in any substance, these we may with confidence join together again; for whatever *have once had an union in nature* may be united again.¹³

¹² *Essay*, Book IV, chap. 4, sec. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Book II, chap. 4, sec. 12. Italics mine.

But after this very simple statement of the ground of the reference of the idea as meaning to existence as reality, Locke at once finds himself on the other horn. If the meaning and existence, the idea and reality, are really "found together," if the reference is given along with the separation, how should there ever be any doubt, and where is there any room for error? How can there be any disagreement? Moreover, what meaning can "agreement" have but mere repetition? And even repetition has no significance where there is nothing else. In other words, Locke finds here that he has simply exchanged his "trifling," "tautologous," "analytic," knowledge, consisting of "the reference of ideas to each other in the mind," for one equally trifling, consisting of a *given* or "found" reference of ideas to an existential reality. Thus Locke's difficulty, all the way through, is not to find certainty merely; this he has with a vengeance, in his trifling propositions. The problem is to find a place for uncertainty and error. There must, of course, on the other hand, be a way out of this uncertainty and error. As a whole, the problem is to reach a theory of knowledge that will square with both the certainty and uncertainty, the truth and error, the struggle and satisfaction, so palpably present in experience. The difficulty is in reaching a statement of one that does not exclude the other.

The persistence of this difficulty is apparent in Locke's further attempt to leave a place for doubt and struggle, by an effort to rescue existence and meaning from this pre-established harmony. Locke's procedure at this point again seems very naive; and yet, if Locke could ask just how far we have advanced beyond it, it might turn out that our patronizing attitude toward his account has less foundation than we could wish. Locke's way of making room for doubt, effort, and error is as follows: while the idea and the reality are thus found together, when they *are* found, yet the finding, after all, involves *searching*. "It is by *trying* alone that I can certainly know what other qualities coexist with those of my complex idea, e. g., whether that yellow, heavy, fusible body I call gold be malleable or no."¹⁴ This searching, "trying," is carried on in the investigation of substances "which have most to do with the affairs of life," by "the further observation of the senses." Now, during this searching there is suspense, uncertainty, and the possibility of error. As a general statement of the location of doubt and error, this, as is the case with most of Locke's general descriptions of experience, leaves very little room for improvement. The difficulty comes, of course, in interpreting it in terms of the rest of his account.

The most immediate and glaring difficulty is that of effecting any kind of a reconciliation of this "trying" with the final givenness of the connection between meaning and reality. It is difficult to see how the searching for this connection between idea and reality, which finally is simply to "appear," can be anything more than mere suspense. How can there be any uncertainty or error if meaning and reality are bound to appear together? The only chance for uncertainty would be

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Book IV, chap. 12, sec. 9. Italics mine.

merely in regard to the duration of the waiting or "trying." There could be none in regard to the final outcome. Then how can any real error occur? In what is it finally to consist? Locke's answer is, virtually, that we know as a matter of experience that this searching, trying stage is not a mere empty waiting, nor gazing into empty space, but that it is filled with suggestions, guesses, with certain hypothetical connections of ideas and reality which finally, on what ground doth not yet appear, are either rejected as false or accepted as partial revelations, as instalments of the entire fact.

This, of course, still further surrenders the ultimate givenness of the connection between idea and reality, and brings with it a train of fresh difficulties. First, whence come these suggestions, these hypotheses? If Locke dealt with this question explicitly and in this form, he would have answered, of course: "From the continued operation of the senses." And this would again have thrown him upon the other point of the fundamental dilemma of his whole position, viz., the possibility of ever getting rid of the accompanying uncertainty when once it is admitted. For if the senses can and do make doubtful and false connections, how is "the further operation of the senses" to help matters? Or, conversely, if "the further operations of the senses" do somehow make a true connection, why should not the earlier do so? What is the difference between the operation of the senses when they reveal a doubtful or false connection and when they give the true one?

The answer of most epistemology since Kant, and indeed the virtual answer Locke himself makes to this question, is, in its first and most general form, that it is the difference between the *partial* and the *completed* experience. To be sure, we are told in the same breath that a complete completeness can never be reached by human experience; for there is no limit to "the appearances of reality in sensation" and to the consequent reference of ideal constructions to reality. Now, if we are to think of truth in general as consisting in this stream of reference of ideas to reality, what is to break up this stream into specific truths? That is, what is to decide when we have reached a truth? The answer to this is that truth, in the particular case, is marked by the appearance of a sense of "harmony," of "satisfaction," or by the appearance of a greater degree of "definition" or "determination" of the idea. But what right have we to any "sense of harmony" and "satisfaction" at any particular time, if the awful gap between our meanings and ultimate reality still yawns? How can we find any "resting" place? Reality, surely, does not give out. And if this suggests that not reality, but *we*, give out, and have to "rest," then shall we say that the point at which we have to stop for breath is where we reach a particular truth, a "relatively" complete and determined experience? And error—what shall it be? A failure to get all the breath we need? "Error is truth, it is partial truth that is false only because partial and left incomplete?"¹⁵ To be sure, we are told further that error is not mere incompleteness; else it would not differ from truth.¹⁶ It is a

¹⁵ BRADLEY, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 122.

¹⁶ As showing just how much difference between truth and error is left from this standpoint, there is an interest-

ing passage in the last chapter of *Appearance and Reality*, p. 541: "Every finite truth or fact to some extent must be unreal and false, and it is impossible in the end certainly to

meaning which "collides with reality," a meaning which reality "rejects," "repulses," "repudiates," etc."

But what is the sign of this "collision," "rejection," "repudiation," etc.? The first answer is that it is a disagreement, a collision among the ideas themselves.¹⁸ But does not this come near to begging the point? To say that the collision of the ideas with each other is due to a collision with reality, and that we know they have collided with reality because they disagree with each other, does not seem to put us very far forward. However, in another connection, we get a very pertinent and illuminating answer. "Where experience, inward or outward, clashes with our views, where there arises thus *disorder, confusion, and pain*, we may speak of illusion. It is the course of events in collision with the set of ideas."¹⁹ To be sure, Mr. Bradley in this passage is defining illusion, not error. Indeed, the quotation is taken from the passage in which the distinction between error and illusion is drawn; but to the writer this distinction, as Mr. Bradley states it, seems to belong to the "without-a-difference" species. How much of a difference there is may be gathered from a comparison of the following with the above quotation: "It [error] is, in other words, the collision of a mere idea with reality."²⁰ And this, which follows shortly after the passage first quoted above: "Therefore, we must have error present always, and this presence entails some illusion."

Now, the "disorder, confusion, and pain" here appealed to are evidently not of a *peculiar* sort arising from the mere failure of our meanings to copy an external reality. They must be the "disorder, confusion, and pain" of any and every sort that arise in "the conduct of life." And if these are the signs that reality rejects our proffered means—the signs of error—their disappearance and the reinstatement of order, control, and satisfaction, in the conduct of life, must, notwithstanding the formal repudiations²¹ of the "practical" criterion, be the signs that reality accepts our suit—the signs of truth. Thus, while for both Locke and Mr. Bradley the formal standard for truth and error is given as the agreement and disagreement of meaning with a world of completed reality beyond, the real criterion is found in the relation of these meanings to the order and disorder, the satisfaction and dissatisfaction, of concrete living.

The teleological character of this relation between meaning and reality is still further deepened as we note that order and disorder, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, presuppose some desire, interest, aim. Apart from such an already defined direction of action, order and confusion can have no meaning. And by the time thus much is admitted, one begins to wonder whether these harmonies and confusions in the conduct of life be not something more than mere arbitrary *signs* of truth and error.

know, of any, how false it may be. We cannot know this, because the unknown extends illimitably, and all abstraction is precarious and at the mercy of what is not observed. If our knowledge were a system the case would then undoubtedly be altered. With regard to everything we should then know the place assigned to it by the whole, and we could measure the exact degree of truth and false-

hood which anything possessed. . . . But any system of this kind seems, most assuredly, by its essence impossible." Italics mine.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. xvi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

²¹ Cf. BRADLEY, *Principles of Logic*, pp. 18-21 and 531.

And when we further seek for some details of the way in which this "disorder, confusion, and pain" is produced through the rejection of our meanings by reality, one meets with very little encouragement. We are told that "the idea collides with reality;" but little is vouchsafed concerning the nature of the idea and of this reality that will show *how* such a collision takes place and why it should be confusing and painful. To be sure, confusion and pain are implied in the ordinary connotation of "collision," but collision in the ordinary sense means more than "the collision of a *mere idea* with a reality beyond." In the first place, it is difficult to see how a "mere idea," as simply an intended copy or symbol of reality, can "collide" with that reality or anything else. And the difficulty grows when it is recalled that this reality which the idea is trying to reflect is itself a completed and static affair. "Nothing perfect, nothing *genuinely real*, can move."²² Why should there be any "collision" between even the false symbol and the reality which is not moving? If it be said that, while the reality does not move, *we* do, and so run against it, aside from the ever-recurring puzzle of the inclusion of motion even as appearance in a static absolute, one must ask: Why and how do we move? And what connection is there between our movement and these ideas which are partial copies of a static reality? In what way does this idea of a motionless reality produce or influence action? Doubtless it would be answered that our activity is due to the imperfection of the idea. If the copy were perfect, if it fully agreed with the reality, no activity would be needed. Activity is due to the imperfection of our knowledge. Aside from the want of any *modus operandi* in such statements, we are aware of this imperfection of meaning only through the "disorder, confusion, and pain of experience," and, as stated above, this disorder, confusion, and pain presuppose activity already going on in some more or less specific direction. In other words, this disagreement between meaning and reality which is somehow to be the stimulus to movement is known only through the very activity which it is supposed to stimulate.

In Mr. Royce's account one reads:

There is no purely external criterion of truth. You cannot merely look from without upon an ideal construction and say whether or no it corresponds to its object. Every finite idea has to be judged by its own specific purpose. Ideas are like tools. They are there for an end. They are true, as the tools are good, precisely by reason of their adjustment to this end. To ask me which of two ideas is the more nearly true is like asking me which of two tools is the better tool. The question is a sensible one if the purpose in the mind is specific, but not otherwise.²³

This sounds like the opening of a new chapter in epistemology. Here very little room is promised for the conceptions of a completed immovable reality, or of the merely representative character of meaning. Here the idea is a "*tool*," and is to have its value defined with reference to the "specific use" to which it is put. But when one reads again that the idea's "specific purpose" is, after all, not to relieve

²² *Appearance and Reality*, p. 500. Italics mine. Cf. also BOSANQUET, *Logic*, Vol. I, p. 259.

²³ *The World and the Individual*, p. 308.

the "disorder, confusion, and pain" of everyday life, but is merely to "correspond," photographically or algebraically,²⁴ to an object; and when one further finds that this object is fixed eternally in the Absolute, and that this correspondence in human experience must be "partial and fragmentary," one is carried back at once to Locke and his problems. One might begin by asking why the idea seeks this correspondence at all. To this we are told that "what the idea always aims to find in its object is nothing whatever but the idea's own conscious purpose or will embodied in some more determinate form than the idea by itself alone at this instant consciously possesses."²⁵ Still the questions will not down. Why does the idea want a more determinate form? What is the standard for determination in general? And what decides the degree of increased determinateness it is seeking in the object? And if the idea fixes in advance the degree of determination, how can the object add more determination and still agree with the idea? And if this degree of determination is not fixed in advance by the idea, if there is only "a vague idea," of more determinateness, then what is to decide in favor of one object rather than another as supplying the proper degree of determination? This brings us to the problem of truth and error.

In the definitions of truth and error the same difficulties pursue. "An error is an error about a specific object only in case the purpose imperfectly defined by the vague idea at the instant when the error is made is better defined, is in fact better fulfilled, by an object whose determinate character in some wise, although never absolutely, opposes the fragmentary efforts made to define them."²⁶ But what is one to understand by "imperfectly defined" and "better defined," and what is the measure of "better fulfilled"? Of truth the formal definition is as follows: "It is true, this instant's idea, if in its own measure and on its own plan, it corresponds, even in its vagueness, to its own final and completely individual expression. Its expression would be the very life of fulfilment of purpose which this present idea already fragmentarily begins, as it were, to express."²⁷ But how is the idea to know whether its present degree of determinateness is nearer than any other to its "final and completed form" which is not yet known? And again, what is meant by "in its own measure" and "on its own plan"? How can it have a "measure" of its "own," if this "final and completely individual" form, never reached in finite life, is the standard? And what are the signs of even this "fragmentary" agreement with this final and completed form?

Moreover, if "Every finite idea is, as such, a general type of empirical and fragmentary fulfilment of purpose,"²⁸ in just what, after all, does the difference between truth and error, in any particular case, consist? Every idea falls short of the final and complete form of determination. The true idea is one which comes *nearer* this form than another. But if this final form never appears in this life, what is to decide when one idea is "nearer" than another to this "completely individual" form?

²⁴ *The World and the Individual*, pp. 304 ff.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

Here it is interesting to turn to Mr. Royce's illustration of the particular case. "Do you intend to sing in tune? Then your musical ideas are false *if they lead you to strike what are, then called false notes.*"²⁹ Here surely there is no reference to the absolute idea or absolute object. Here the final degree of determination is just that of the concrete desire. Here it is not the idea's purpose merely to correspond "in a fragmentary way" with an absolute object eternally fixed in the absolute consciousness. It is here the idea's business to help construct an action that shall get rid of the "disorder, confusion, and pain" of singing out of tune. And if we revert to the first passage quoted in which it is stated that every idea "has to be judged by its own specific purpose," we read that "ideas are like tools; they are there for an end." Here, too, surely, the "specific purpose" and "end" of the idea is not a "fragmentary correspondence" with "its own final and completely individual" form; unless, indeed, we are ready to say that "its own final and completely individual" form is simply the form that brings the relief from this present pain and confusion of singing out of tune. And if we say this, then the distinction between finite and Absolute truth and reality would seem to disappear.

And this suggests that, notwithstanding Mr. Royce's most telling criticism of Mr. Bradley's divorce of thought and reality, one can but question whether this appeal to a "final," "completed," and "fulfilled" purpose does not, after all, leave us in the same boat with Mr. Bradley. If it is the very essence of thought, of the idea, to embody purpose, and if "The real as such is the complete embodiment in individual form and final fulfilment of the internal meaning [the purpose] of finite ideas,"³⁰ and if "To be, in the final sense, means to be just such a life, complete, present to experience, and conclusive of the search for perfection which every finite idea in its own measure undertakes whenever it seeks for any object,"³¹ how can there be any place for thought "as such" in the ultimate reality? How can a purpose "fulfilled" and "completed" remain as a purpose? Is not this continual existence of "a fulfilled purpose" a paradox? And are we not then face to face with Mr. Bradley's reality in which "thought as such" has no place?

In general, then, the fundamental difficulty for both Locke and present epistemology appears to consist in a discrepancy between the conception of the nature of knowledge and reality in general and the accepted criteria in the particular instance. There is no organic connection between the satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the harmony and disorder, used as a standard of truth and error in the particular case and the general function of knowledge as reporting or algebraically symbolizing a completed and unchangeable reality lying beyond the process of knowledge.

Now, in such case the discrepancy may be charged to either side or both. It is the thesis of this paper that the seat of the difficulty here is in the general conception of knowledge and reality, not in the standard accepted for the particular instance, and that the problem of logic at present is to bring the general conception of knowledge

²⁹ *The World and the Individual*, pp. 307, 308. Italics mine.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 339. Brackets mine.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 341.

and reality into agreement with these criteria of "order" and "confusion" of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, upon which we fall back in the concrete case. This demands a much further analysis of "the concrete case" than psychology and logic have yet made. Thus far the conceptions of reality as a complete immovable system, and of meaning as merely representative, and as given "loosed from reality," involved in the theories of the general nature and relations of knowledge and reality, have so obscured the situation in the concrete case that the necessity for further analysis of the latter has not been felt. "Disorder, confusion, and pain" have been accepted as merely arbitrary signs, that our meanings are not accepted by reality. The present problem of logic is to work out just this connection between our meanings and the harmony and confusion, the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of concrete experience.

To sum up thus far, Locke, as most epistemology since, starts with meaning given apart from reality, the problem being to get them together. But it is found that, with the separation thus given, the connection must be given also. Then comes the difficulty of finding any place for effort, doubt, and error. On the other hand, when this connection is described as not given, but achieved through effort, it turns out that the connection can be made only through achieving the separation as well. For the separation that is achieved cannot be a complete separation. In an achieved separation the separated members are held in leash. It is Hegel's separation together—synthesis through analysis. We have found also that another phase of this same difficulty has been the attempt to confine movement, development, to the side of meaning only. And here the problem has been to see how the moving, shifting, active ideas can reflect a completed, immovable reality. Here, too, it may be remarked that Locke's system of ready-made, unchangeable ideas—direct offprints from the face of reality—seem to possess a decided advantage in such a representation over the "ideal constructions" of present logic. Locke, of course, does not keep consistently to these given, simple ideas for his knowledge of the real world. But the fact that he feels the need of them, when he is trying to bring meaning and reality together, is a point in favor of the consistency of Locke's conception of knowledge with his conception of the nature of ultimate reality. The internal difficulties of a representational epistemology certainly have not diminished since it has been forced by modern psychology to exchange the static for the dynamic idea. It would seem that the root of the central difficulty in present logic might be stated as the failure thus far to work out the implications of the thoroughly teleological and functional idea which it has accepted from modern psychology.²³ The reconstructive implications of the discussion thus far would sum themselves in the following propositions: (1) that reality can be identified with neither meaning as such nor existence as such; (2) that meaning is not given in separation from existence regarded as reality; (3) that the distinction of meaning and existence is one falling inside reality; (4) that meaning does not merely copy, sym-

²³ Cf. SCHILLER, "Personal Idealism," *Axioms as Postulates*, secs. 48, 49. Cf. also "The Functional versus the Representational Theory of Knowledge in Locke's Essay,"

The University of Chicago Contributions to Philosophy, Vol. III, No. 1.

bolize, or report reality, but helps to constitute it; (5) that, as constituted by the meaning and existence, reality is not an immovable and completed system, but essentially dynamic and developmental.

In attempting a more positive statement of the relation between existence, meaning, and reality to which the difficulties encountered by both Locke and current epistemology point, it is to be said that such a statement here can be only a very general and schematic one. As a point of departure, let us take what was given above as one of the ways of stating the central difficulty and problem. The difficulty is that there appears no organic connection between ideas—meanings regarded as copies or symbols of reality conceived as a complete, fixed existence, and the harmony and disorder, the satisfaction and dissatisfaction, of everyday life which are accepted as the working criteria of truth and error in particular cases. What has the reflection of this fixed existence to do with the influence of ideas on our successes and failures? If we are told that our failures are due to “the collision of our ideas with reality,” then we must ask for details. Just how does collision of our ideas with this existence beyond affect us? What are the links in the connection? Or, is this “collision with reality” after all but a name for our failures? The problem is, then, to discover some point of contact of ideas with the harmony and disorder, the satisfaction and pain, in the particular case, and to see whether this involves the representation of a complete and immovable reality.

As already remarked, psychology has been at work for some time on the first part of this problem—especially since it has felt the influence of the conceptions of biological evolution. And, as also remarked, it is the opposition between the accepted results of this work of psychology and old conceptions of knowledge and reality still retained that is responsible for the strained relations in the epistemological household. From his work thus far on this problem of the relation of ideas to “the disorder, confusion and pain” of life, the psychologist tells us that, following the method suggested by evolution, we get a great deal of introductory light on the question by noting the conditions under which ideas develop.³³ He points out, first, that activity in which ideas—meanings—are absent is in the relatively mechanical form of habit. By habit he means a co-ordination of activities in which the action at any given moment seems to be an adequate stimulus to further activity. In other words, a habit is a co-ordination of activities that can be wielded as a unit of activity in a larger whole. In such a negative statement of the conditions of ideas the positive side is implied. As this perfect continuity of stimulation, present in the habit form of activity, is marked by the absence of ideas, so we find ideas appearing at the point of interruption of this conti-

³³ Here, of course, we are warned that the existence and meaning of the idea are two quite different matters. The distinction goes without saying, but it is implied in the standpoint from which this paper is written that it is the connection rather than the distinction between these two phases that needs attention nowadays. The attempt to separate the members of this distinction and farm them out to different disciplines for separate treatment is one

way of stating what appears to the writer to be at the bottom of the present confusion between psychology and logic, and what is back of the growing conviction that our epistemology needs to be psychologized and our psychology—*e. g.*, the doctrine of parallelism—epistemologized. Cf. PROFESSOR DEWEY's article on “Psychology as Philosophic Method,” *Mind*, Vol. XI, O. S., No. 42.

nity in habit. And here, at the very outset, we reach again the center of the whole problem, viz., the relation of this appearance of ideas to the interruption of habit. Locke and all his successors virtually agree that the ideas do appear at this point. The question is: What is the significance and the manner of their appearance at this juncture? If it is their business to mirror a reality beyond this process of activity, there appears no particular reason why they should not perform that function as well in some other relation; for example, as an activity merely parallel and independent of habit.³⁴ In other words, is the "disorder, confusion, and pain" involved in this breach of continuity a mere arbitrary sign of "the collision" of some "mere idea" with "a reality beyond" or is it out of a collision, *within reality*, that the idea springs? From the former standpoint the query constantly arises: Whence and why the idea in the first place? And how and why the "collision?" Does reality impress or stimulate in some way a false idea in order to get up a collision with itself? And this is all aside from the difficulty already suggested as to how an immovable reality can produce anything, even a false idea, to say nothing of a "collision."

In attempting to trace in a very general way the connection between ideas and this interruption in the continuity of habit, we need to start with some account of this interruption itself. For if we conceive this interruption as coming from without, *e. g.*, as arising from a collision of habit—not ideas in this case—with an immovable reality, the entire web of Locke's difficulties settles about us at once. Stripped of metaphor, what is the meaning of this "collision"? Just how does habit run against this inscrutable and immovable reality? Moreover, if the collision is to be remedied, it must be in this case by habit "backing out" and reconstructing itself. No concessions can be expected from reality. And if the idea is somehow to be the instrument of this reconstruction, how can it do so by merely "reflecting" the static reality? At any rate, two kinds of ideas would appear to be needed, one to "reflect" the static reality, and another, more flexible and dynamic, to help reorganize habit.

It would seem, then, that habit must be regarded as somehow developing its own interruptions. And, after all, this would not seem to be such a difficult conception. It is scarcely more than the commonplace notion, the philosophical significance of which Hegel perhaps first pointed out, that activity is conceived as constantly producing new conditions of its further ongoing; that in activity there must be a constant reorganization of the results of the activity back into the process. This is, of course, equivalent to saying that, in the last analysis, activity cannot be stated in terms of mere habit. It implies that *activity in any final sense must include both a mechanical and a reconstructing function*. As habit constitutes the mechanical, the conserving, materializing function, so the idea is the radical reconstructing function in activity.

³⁴This is, indeed, to the writer the meaning of the whole paradoxical doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism. It is an expression of the failure to find any connection between the idea's alleged office of reporting a static "reality beyond" and its manifest dynamic relation to habit as re-

vealed by present psychology. Cf. MR. BAWDEN'S article, "The Functional View of the Relation between the Physical and the Psychological," *Philosophical Review*, Vol. XI, pp. 474-84; also Part III of MR. WARD'S *Naturalism and Agnosticism*.

Habit and thought are thus constituent poles of experience. As such, neither can be defined apart from the other. Each limits the other in every particular case, but neither can be regarded as "the ultimate" out of which the other is absolutely evolved. Thus neither habit nor its interruption can be defined apart from some desire, some end. Walking or creeping, as a habit, must be defined with reference to some desire, *e. g.*, a desire for food; but this desire is in turn a part of the process of reconstructing a breach in the process of assimilation. While habit must thus refer to some desire, some end, for its definition, it is, in turn, out of the necessity of meeting new conditions *created by its own work* that new ends, new ideas, arise.³⁵

From this very formal statement of the relation between ideas and habit it is apparent: (1) that ideas are here regarded, not as merely reflecting or symbolizing a static reality, but as *doing actual work in reorganizing habit*, a work that may involve symbolizing, but a symbolizing that is a part of an actual reconstruction; (2) the materials of this reconstruction are not given from a reality beyond the process. The material is none other than the disorganized habit itself. There is thus perfect continuity between the material and the use to which it is to be put. With the material for the reorganization given from a reality beyond there can be no assurance that it will answer the purpose. If it does, it is only by the grace of the Deity or the "uniformity of nature."

Such a conception of the logical function of habit makes possible also a consistent view of the place of sensation in knowledge. So far sensation has played a very equivocal rôle in epistemology. On the one hand, it is that "in which reality is given." It is "the point of direct contact with reality." Locke says his simple ideas of sensation are all true to reality. So far sensationalism. But at this point the rationalist observes that if we really do come into "direct contact with reality" in sensation, if the "simple ideas of sensation" are true to reality, and if it is the business of perception to "report reality," then why go on with thought? Why construct "complex ideas" in which we are all the while getting farther and farther from reality? The fact that we do and must go on thinking and constructing complex ideas—continues the rationalist—shows that sensation, instead of giving us reality, gives us only appearances. And, beside these different views of the relation of sensation to reality, no very consistent view appears, in either camp, of just the nature and function of sensation itself. Now it is stated in almost purely physiological terms, and again it appears to almost usurp the work of thought. But, if we find ideas arising at the point of disintegration of habit, and if we take sensation as the first appearance in consciousness of this breach—to use Mr. James's phrase, "The first thing in the way of consciousness"—it would seem to bring us nearer a much-needed definiteness in the conception of the logical significance of sensation. Here sensation, as the first shock of this interruption of habit, constitutes the "this," demanding interpretation—meaning. And this demand for meaning is

³⁵ Cf. PROFESSOR DEWEY, "Reflex Arc Concept," *Psychological Review*, Vol. III.

something more than a demand for more representation; it is a demand for reconstruction.

But before going farther in this very general and dogmatic fashion, let us resort to Locke's favorite illustration of "the solution of gold in *aqua regia*." First let us note that the process of manipulating gold in liquids involves a circuit of visual, tactile-motor habits, serving some aim, *e. g.*, that of cleaning the gold. Now, the rupture of such a circuit may come either as a visual sensation, in the disappearance of the gold from sight, or as a tactile-motor sensation, in the failure to touch the gold on reaching for it. And here again, however "involuntary" this breach may be, it is to be noted that it must come as a break in, and therefore entirely in terms of, *the activities already going on*.³⁶ If the interruption be due to "a collision with reality," it must be a reality in the form of the visual-tactile-motor processes already involved. How could there be a "collision" with any other reality? The coming to consciousness of the visual-tactile-motor processes means that what has been a circle of mutually stimulating activities is now broken up and is demanding reconstruction. And the first shock of this "break" is felt as the visual or the tactile-motor sensation—the "this" demanding interpretation and reconstruction.

Now, if we regard the "this," *i. e.*, this mass of visual-tactile-motor habit material thrown up into consciousness as the "existence" which the ideas are to *mean*, we have, at any rate, an "existence" not far "beyond," nor one to be merely copied by the ideas, but an existence which constitutes the very material of the ideas. It is, to be sure, a very active existence; but then ideas, according to present psychology, are very dynamic affairs. Besides, we have already seen that the difficulty all along has been to find an agreement between these very active ideas and an inert, static existence. Such a dynamic existence would also seem promising in the effort to overcome the too great "looseness" hitherto necessarily insisted upon between the existence and the ideas. "Necessarily," because it has been only through such a "loosing" from its static existence that the idea could gain freedom and flexibility enough to be of service in "the conduct of life"—though, to be sure, this freedom becomes a serious obstacle to its reunion with existence.

Passing now to the function of *meaning*, it might appear that with "existence" made so dynamic as above, the active ideas as the embodiment of meaning might now be regarded as the mere "symbols" or "representatives" of existence. This, indeed, would seem to be more nearly possible now that the discrepancy between an inert existence and its active representatives is removed. But if this were the sole function of the ideal construction, it is difficult to see how it would help matters. Indeed, it would seem to make matters worse, since all it could do would be to bring the disintegration of habit into consciousness. If the only business of thought were to go on reporting this disintegration of habit, consciousness would soon be reduced to a vast pile of psychical scrap-iron.

³⁶ Cf. BALDWIN, *Mental Development-Methods and Processes*, 2d ed., p. 256.

It has just been said, if mere reporting or symbolizing existence were "the sole function of meaning," etc., this implies that representation, symbolization, etc., is a part of the process of meaning. When the breach in the visual-tactile-motor co-ordination, as above sketched, comes, the first step in the process of reconstruction is to define and locate the interruption. This involves a symbolizing, a "reflecting" if you please, of the activities concerned. But, once more, even this first process of reflection is not a *mere* reflection. It is a reflection in which the work of reconstruction has already begun. For when this interruption passes beyond the stage of the mere "shock and inarticulate presence" of sensation, into ideas, into *meaning*, the very fact that the old co-ordination expressed in our illustration, in "gold insoluble" is reported as possibly broken, involves the beginning of the reconstruction expressed in "gold soluble." Unless experience is to fall into absolute chaos, into a state of mere negation, one co-ordination can be disintegrated only through the beginning of its own reconstruction.³⁷ With absolutely no element of reconstruction present, consciousness would lapse into the mere "shock" of sensation. Meaning, then, in its very beginning, stands for an actual work of reconstruction, not for a mere reflection of the materials to be reconstructed.

With existence interpreted as the material to be reconstructed, and meaning as the process of reconstruction, the question of their relation should have, perhaps, a little special notice. First, it is apparent that the connection here required is of a very different sort from that demanded between a static existence and its representative. Here the relationship is not one of "coexistence" and "correspondence point for point," but is that of the interpenetration of material and process. Nor are existence and meaning here "given apart," the problem being to work them into this relationship. As the interrupted habit is "material" in the process of reconstruction *only*, so there are no ideas, no empty meanings, wandering about unattached to any existence. As there is no mere process of thought, grinding away, as an empty mill waiting for grist, so there is no pile of habit fragments lying about as material waiting to be put into the hopper. Here existence and meaning, the material and the process of reconstruction, develop together as the two complementary, inseparable, and constitutive functions of one inclusive process. In short, the problem of connection with which Locke struggled disappears, simply because there is no such separation of meaning from existence as that with which he started. Meaning here is not "given loosed from existence." From the very outset of the experience, beginning in the visual-tactile-motor sensation interpreted as the "disappearance of gold," existence, as constituted by the activities involved in the habit matrix, is the very *Stoff* and content of the idea, of the meaning; and the latter is simply this material in process of reconstruction.

Locke's unconscious tribute to this organic relation between existence and meaning

³⁷This is, of course, "the positive character of negation" upon which present logic insists. Cf. BOSANQUET, *Logic*, Book I, chap. vii, and BRADLEY, *Principles of Logic*, chap. iii.

appears, as has already been noted, in his answering the inquiry after the validity of his simple ideas with an account of their origin; a procedure for which Locke has been much condemned, but which, after all, if he could have freed it from the conception of the completed character of existence and of the merely representing function of the idea, would have made impossible the extreme separation of the problems of origin and validity so strenuously insisted upon by most of the neo-Kantian epistemology.

With this very general interpretation of meaning, existence, and reality, and their relation to each other, the question which has been urged so insistently throughout the discussion, upon other views, should be noticed—the question, namely, of a standard of truth and error, including an interpretation of doubt and certainty. If meaning is the reconstructive function of activity, what is to determine the limits of this reconstruction in any particular case? When is the reconstruction “true”? And if meaning is in such close connection with the material of habit, if the latter is indeed the very *Stoff* of the meaning, why should there ever be any uncertainty and error?

First, let us recall that the problem of reconstruction is not one of reconstruction of habit at large. It is the reconstruction of a certain set of activities already engaged in a specific work, *e. g.*, manipulating gold in liquids. Here in a very general form our criterion is already in sight. If the disintegration of the co-ordination of eye and hand, activities involved in manipulating gold in liquids, constitutes the *demand* for reconstruction, the restoration of a co-ordination between the eye and hand, *with reference to handling gold in liquids*, must constitute the criterion for the completion, the “truth,” of the reconstruction. The conclusion, “gold-soluble-in-aqua-regia,” means the establishment of a new habit of manipulating gold in liquids. Here “agreement,” harmony, between meaning and existence does not mean that one copies the other; on the contrary, it means that the one responds to the demand of the other for *change, for reconstruction*. The only way, then, in which the idea can be *false* to “the reality as it appears in sensation” is through its failure—not to copy, but to change it, for the only reality appearing in sensation is just the disintegrated mass of habit demanding reorganization.

If the “truth” of the meaning consists in its being a reconstruction of habit with reference to a certain demand, what shall be said of uncertainty and error? We have already seen that meaning, as a reconstruction, is not a mere reflection of work already done, but is a new work, a new creation achieved. It is the former interpretation, indeed, as has been repeatedly pointed out, that makes it so difficult to account for error and to prevent knowledge from being “trifling.” But if thought means an actually new work to be done, manifestly at the outset there must be uncertainty, not of reaching *any* outcome—this would land us in the paralysis of absolute skepticism—but uncertainty concerning the exact character of the outcome. That is, uncertainty means that thought, instead of being a symbol of an already developed reality, is itself the instrument of development. It means that life is not given, but must be won. On the other hand, the “perfect certainty” for which Locke longed would mean the

complete reduction of experience to a mechanism, in which there would be no place because no demand for thought, indeed for consciousness of any kind.

And actual error—failure, what is it to mean? Locke's answer is: "The disagreement of ideas with reality;" Mr. Bradley's: "The collision of a mere idea with reality"—the "rejection," "repudiation" of meaning by reality. And the signs of this "disagreement," "collision," and "rejection" are the "disorder, confusion, and pain" of everyday life. We have already seen how difficult it is to find any connection here between the sign and the thing signified. But if we can regard the "reality" in this case as the mass of disorganized habit demanding reconstruction, and if we can take this "disagreement," "collision," and "rejection" to mean that, the work of reconstruction being an actual work to be done and not being performed at a single stroke, it may therefore at a given stage be incomplete *with reference to what is wanted*,³⁸ it would seem we should have reached a basis for the conception of error which would make possible some connection between it and its sign. For surely it is not difficult to see the connection between the incompleting reconstruction of these disorganized activities and "disorder, confusion, and pain" as its signs. And at this point it might be said that in a certain sense this "disorder, confusion, and pain" is due as much to a lack of "collision" as to the collision of ideas with reality. That is to say, what is needed at this point is a further working over of the habit material, in a sense more "collision" of habit and ideas. And here, too, we may say of error, as of doubt, that it is not failure in a final sense, it is simply unfinished work.

Here an important objection will be urged to this statement of the meaning of truth and error. It will be said that this conception of the criterion runs into the infinite "regressus." Thus the specific interest, *e. g.*, manipulating gold in liquids, with reference to which the habit, its interruption, and the reconstruction itself are defined, is itself an ideal construction and must in turn be referred to other interests and habits for its definition, and so on without end. It is, indeed, just this everlasting "othering" of thought that is its bane for all representational views of knowledge. But let us note first that this "regressus" objection derives its force from the assumption that the thought-habit form of experience is *transitory*; and that it must, therefore, be referred to something "beyond" for a beginning and an end. With this assumption in mind, the reference of a particular work of thought to some interest involving previous thought must appear to be in the elephant-tortoise class. But freed from this assumption, this "regressus" need mean only that we conceive experience as a process the results of which at any given point constitute the material for and stimulus to further activity and that we accept experience thus conceived as our "ultimate reality." It means merely the commonplace enough fact that interest at any given moment is the outgrowth of previous experience, and cannot be defined

³⁸"Truth and error are essentially relative to the interest of the subject. To put a question seriously is to want to know the answer. A person cannot be right or wrong without reference to some interest or purpose. A man

wanders about a town. . . . Just so far as he has no definite aim he cannot go astray."—STROUT, essay on "Error," *Personal Idealism*, p. 10; cf. also same essay, sec. vi.

apart from it, and also that it is the further development of previous experience—a development, not toward an ultimate, fixed goal, taken as a standard, but a development in the sense that the present is built out of the past. Stated from the negative side, it means that the “disorder, confusion, and pain,” the relief of which is accepted as the sign of the “truth” of the reconstruction, is not mere “disorder, confusion, and pain” at large, but is always of a certain kind, and that this kind is determined with reference to an interest which is the outgrowth of previous experience. Thus the disappearance of gold in *aqua regia* produces “disorder, confusion, and pain” only to one already manipulating gold in liquid. On the other hand, the fact that the old process of manipulating gold in liquid falls into disorder and confusion means that it reaches no abiding form; that in the very process of its own ongoing it develops new activities which must be reorganized into it. Thus again does experience, as constituted by the interacting functions of thought and habit, appear as the process of eternally rebuilding itself out of the products of its own activity.

Another and perhaps more fundamental way of putting the objection just noted is that this statement of the criterion of truth and error, in terms of a concrete interest, does not do justice to the *universality* of meaning. If the work of thought be “true” when it relieves the disorder, confusion, and pain of the situation here and now, whence its universality? Whence the conviction of the value of the work done here and now for other situations? What is the ground of that “probability” to which Locke finally appeals for “practical certainty,” but for which he could offer no explanation but the will of the Deity or the uniformity of nature? First, it may be remarked that all theories of knowledge, from Locke on, holding to an immovable reality and the representational function of thought, have certainly had difficulties enough with this phase of the problem, and whenever they have gone beyond some form of the pre-established harmony view of universality, it appears they have done so at the cost of either the complete and immovable character of reality, or the merely representative character of thought, or both. We have, of course, for a long time been quite certain that the universal must somehow be present in the particular. Just how this occurs is the problem. We have stood bravely, too, for the “concrete” as opposed to the “formal” universal; yet when one looks for statements of the *method* of this “concrete universal,” they turn out to be either little more than formal descriptions of the necessity for it, or statements of it which are hard to reconcile with a static reality and a merely “reporting” knowledge. All accounts of the concrete universal, from Hegel on, which have attempted to do more than point out the demand for it, have based it on the conception of growth, development, involving *purpose*. One or two passages from current literature will suffice for examples:

In this class of objects (mechanical devices, *e. g.*, a watch) we may fearlessly say that it is the *purpose* which is the essence, and that generic judgment rests on the knowledge of essence. In all other classes of objects such a view has degrees of precariousness, and can only be applied to the purpose as immanent, and therefore as not determinate, and as uncertain in its bound-

aries. Nevertheless, when we predicate in the organic world "growth," "development," "self-preservation," "irritability," *we are really referring mechanical processes to an idea of life—an idea of self-relation*, of "inner" and "outer," which is a higher result, though it *is* a result, of their purely mechanical nature.³⁹

We have already seen the part which purpose plays in Mr. Royce's account of meaning. The following passages may be added:

Universal judgments arise in the realm where experience and idea have already fused into one whole: and this is precisely the realm of internal meanings. Here one constructs and observes the consequences of one's construction. But the construction is at once an experience of fact and an idea; an expression of a *purpose* and an observation of what happens. Upon the basis of such ideal constructions one makes universal judgments.⁴⁰

Again:

But what then is the test of the truthful correspondence of an idea to its object, if object and idea can differ so widely? The only answer is in terms of *purpose*. The idea is true if it possesses the sort of correspondence to its object that the idea itself wants to possess.⁴¹

The significance of these statements of meaning in terms of "purpose" is that it promises an intrinsic basis for universality and unity. Meaning as purpose at once becomes determinative of its own "object." The object it constructs, in realizing itself, must be universally valid for *that* purpose. Material that cannot serve the purpose cannot become its "object." The object is simply the expression of the purpose. Here too we have a basis for a unity of "the many in the one" other than the unity of mere identity. We have already seen the difficulty and failure in the attempt to construct a unity out of entities either physical or psychical, or a composite of both. But the idea as purpose arises out of the demand for a reconstruction of disintegrated habit. As "an embodiment of purpose" it is precisely the business of the idea to reorganize, to unify this manifold of disintegrated habit. As existences, there is no possible way for this manifold to become one. They can be unified only in purpose.

Now it would seem that these statements of meaning in terms of purpose should shut out at once all static conceptions of reality and all conceptions of meaning as merely representative; for it would seem to be of the very essence of a purpose or a plan to be reconstructive. But the force of these implications appears broken when we discover that the "purpose" which the idea embodies is, after all, not that of reorganizing the disintegrated habit to the relief of the "disorder, confusion, and pain" of the present situation, but is that of corresponding in a "partial" and "fragmentary" manner with "its own final and complete form" eternally fixed in the Absolute.

Moreover, such an interpretation of the purpose embodied in the idea seems to offer little basis for that intrinsic and "concrete universality" for which the very appeal to purpose is made. It is very difficult to see what basis this "partial and fragmentary correspondence" with the absolute idea can have other than some sort of

³⁹ BOSANQUET, *Logic*, Vol. I, p. 237. Italics and parenthesis mine.

⁴⁰ *The World and the Individual*, Vol. I, p. 229.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 306. Italics mine.

a pre-established harmony. And as for the presence of the universal in the particular—the concrete universal—how can the universal, conceived as an “eternal,” “completed,” and fixed “whole of content,” be present in a purpose which is confessedly but a mere shred of the whole? On the other hand, as before observed, if in the universal the particular—the finite, is “completely fulfilled,” how can there be left any particular in the universal? The complete fulfilment of the particular finite purpose is its annihilation. And with the disappearance of these finite purposes, have we anything left for our universal but Spinoza’s abstract identity?

Now if, instead of regarding the idea as “having” a purpose, we take it as *constituting* the defined purpose or plan of action, involving the construction of an object, through which some “disorder, confusion, and pain is” to be relieved; and if we further recall that there is no other material for this construction than just the mass of disintegrated habit out of which the purpose itself, under the stimulus of the disorder and pain of the disintegration have sprung, it seems we have a basis for the universality at once intrinsic and concrete. Here the “universal in the particular” means that the particular purpose is the outgrowth of previous experience and has no other material for its realization than the results of this preceding activity; and also it means that this work of reconstruction must in turn become the stimulus to and material for further experience. The “particular in the universal” here means that the purpose is not mere reconstruction at large, but is made in response to a specific demand. The unity here is not the static unity of whole and part, but the unity of *growth*. The necessity and universality of the reconstruction here made in response to a specific need is grounded in the fact that the experience here and now, with gold in liquids, is the inevitable outgrowth of past activity, and that it is also the only basis of any future experience with gold in liquids.⁴²

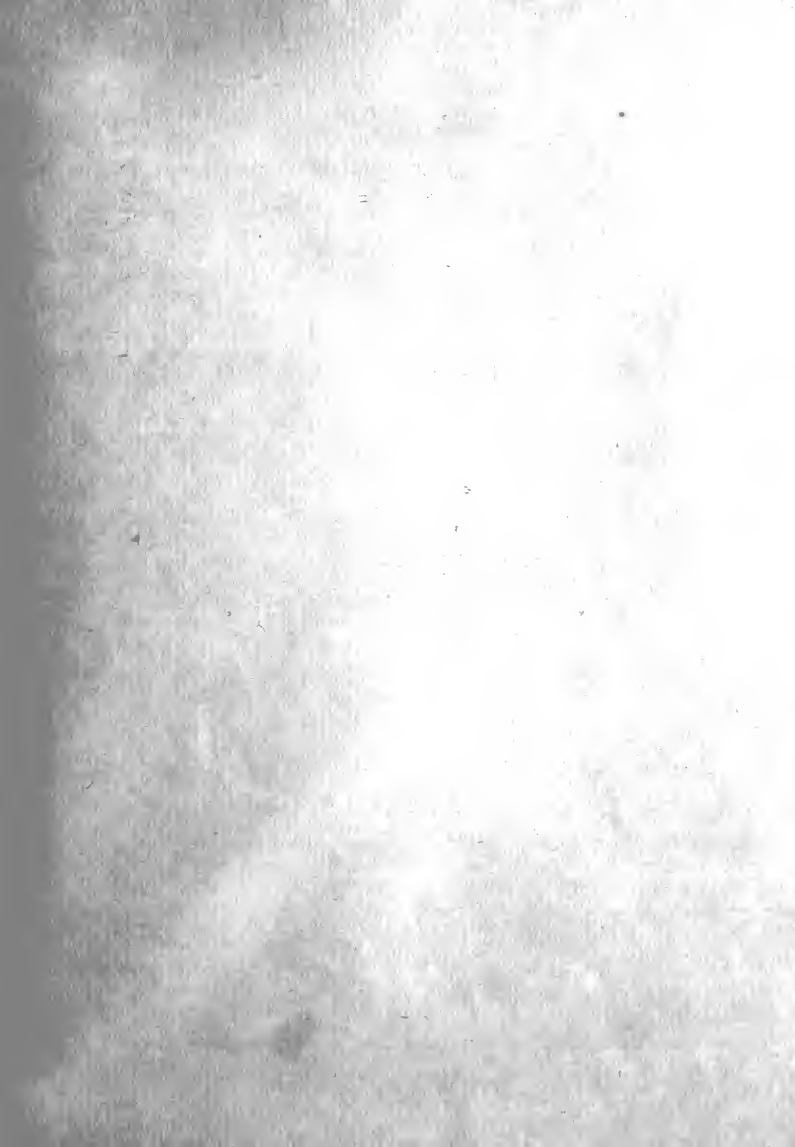
Hence the conviction that the future is as secure as the present and past. It is, indeed, a curious notion that the future alone is “contingent,” while the past is fixed and abiding; that “what’s done is done.” For in every day’s work in history and science, in every new problem solved, in every new advance in any direction, it is precisely the *past* that is being reconstructed. In our illustration it is the old construction, “gold-insoluble,” that is changed. The past is still in the making. The past, as well as the future, is “contingent.” On the other hand, there can be no future experience which is not built on this past and present reconstruction. Whatever future comes must be continuous with the present and past. The world may come to an end; it cannot be turned into absolute chaos. This is, of course, only the Kantian platitude that the future must be “intelligible.”

In this evolutionary character of experience we find the ground for that “practical certainty” of the connection between meaning and reality which Locke, to the last, could refer only to the Deity or to “the uniformity of nature.” With experience conceived as a process of reconstructing itself out of the materials of its own production,

⁴² Cf. BALDWIN, *op. cit.*, pp. 323 ff.

there must be continuity. But when we say, "The future must be continuous with the past and present," we, of course, cannot mean that the present construction will be maintained in that future in its present form. It too must be disintegrated and serve as "material" for the reconstruction of further experience. If just when and where and how it is to serve were determined, we should have, indeed, that "perfect certainty" of which Locke dreamed, but we should have too an Absolute in which there would be no future; in which the last reconstruction had been made, the last problem solved, the last battle fought—a "complete," "perfect," Absolute, if you will, but an Absolute which, if we are to construe out of our present psychology, would be merely a vast system of habit, an Absolute in which there would be no place, because no demand, for either thought or feeling. Probability, confidence, faith, hope, all mean that experience is a *re-construction*. Uncertainty, doubt, the problem, the need of reflection, of courage, of work, mean that experience is a *re-construction*.

In this attempt at some very general reconstructive statements no special paragraph has been devoted to the conception of ultimate reality. It has been manifest throughout that reality is here conceived as just this process of experience of which "existence" and "meaning" have been described as *constitutive functions*. Such a reality is, of course, not of "the-same-yesterday-today-and-forever" type. It is not a reality which gathers all truth into one, completed, eternal whole, and in which "all purposes are completed and fulfilled." It is not a reality in which all thought and effort disappear in a vast becalmed sea of everlasting immediacy. It is a reality of activity, of development, whose own very ongoing is ever creating a demand for new purposings, new thought, new effort; a reality that promises—not "eternal rest," but *Eternal Life*.



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